

service. This legislation will help the VA to help our veterans. I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Everett, Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER), the original sponsor of this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the chairman for working with me on this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shed light on the issue plaguing our Nation's veterans. Specifically, there are an estimated 47,000 cremated veterans' remains that are waiting to be interred because it was not possible to identify the next of kin.

Existing legislation directs the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Service Organizations, and funeral directors to work together in the claiming and interring of deceased veterans. Unfortunately, numerous barriers prevent the effective collaboration among these stakeholders. As it stands today, these barriers are not fully understood, which is preventing an effective solution to the problem from being found.

For instance, the Missing in America Project, a nonprofit service organization that was established to locate and bury unclaimed veterans' remains, identified 100 veterans who were awaiting burial within the State of Pennsylvania over the last couple of years. Some of those veterans waited more than 20 years for a dignified, military burial. We can speculate regarding the reason for this disgrace, but we cannot know for sure without giving this issue the attention it deserves.

That is why I have introduced H.R. 1338, the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act of 2015. My bill requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on matters relating to the claiming and interring of unclaimed veterans' remains. The intent of the study is to confirm the scope of this problem, to uncover any barriers associated with claiming and interring veterans' remains, and to solicit recommendations from the Department of Veterans Affairs on potential solutions.

I would like to thank two of my constituents, Mr. Ron Metros and Mr. Lanny Golden, for working with me on this legislation.

When asked why he is so passionate about this issue, Mr. Golden, a Vietnam veteran, simply replied that his brothers in arms deserve to be buried alongside those who have walked the same path.

I fully agree with Mr. Golden, and I would like to say "thank you" to all of those who have served this great Nation.

I would also like to take this time to thank my colleagues Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member BROWN for working with me. Of course, I thank the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the 98 bipartisan cosponsors of the House for their support.

Also a special thanks to two people without whom I could not have done this. They are my military fellows. One is U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Anna Lloyd. She helped start the process. We then finished up with Air Force Major Cheri Guikema. Both of them provided an invaluable service in putting this bill forward, and I can't thank them enough for their help and also for their continued service to the United States military.

Now, more than ever, we need to stand together and show our veterans we care. None of our heroes should be forgotten, and this is a step forward in reaching that important goal.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I urge my colleagues to support the passing of H.R. 1338, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair will note that the time previously controlled by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) will now be controlled by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO).

There was no objection.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this legislation, the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act of 2015.

In May of last year, reports emerged that the bodies of 52 veterans had remained unburied for over a year at the Los Angeles County Mortuary, located just outside of my district. Similar instances were discovered in 13 other States, demonstrating just how widespread this is. Stories of unburied veterans' bodies are deeply unsettling and the result of gaps in burial procedure policies at the VA. It has to be addressed. Our service men and women have made immense personal sacrifices on behalf of our Nation, and it is unacceptable for their remains to be treated with such a blatant lack of respect and dignity.

Like the gentleman from Pennsylvania and many of my colleagues in the House and Senate, I introduced legislation in an effort to solve this issue. The Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to study the burial of veterans' unclaimed remains in national cemeteries and to report the findings of such studies to Congress. This legislation is an important step toward acknowledging and, ultimately, solving the problem.

Last week, the Senate passed by unanimous consent the 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act, which incorporated the House legislation, and I am happy to see that the companion legislation is now being voted on in the House of Representatives, bringing it one step closer to the President's signature.

We made a commitment to take care of our veterans in both life and death, and it is crucial that we follow through

on it. I encourage my colleagues in the House of Representatives to vote in support of the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his work on this issue and the gentleman from Florida for his continued efforts as the House Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1338, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1338, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HONOR AMERICA'S GUARD-RESERVE RETIREES ACT

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1384) to amend title 38, United States Code, to recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1384

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act".

SEC. 2. PROVISION OF STATUS UNDER LAW BY HONORING CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS AS VETERANS.

(a) VETERAN STATUS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 107 the following new section:

"§ 107A. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components

"Any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10 to retired pay for nonregular service or, but for age, would be entitled under such chapter to retired pay for nonregular service shall be honored as a veteran but shall not be entitled to any benefit by reason of this section."

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 107 the following new item:

"107A. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components."

(b) CLARIFICATION REGARDING BENEFITS.—No person may receive any benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs solely by reason of section 107A

of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material on H.R. 1384.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 1384, the Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act, which was introduced by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

The National Guard and Reserve are vital to our Nation's defense. These brave men and women enlist while knowing they can be deployed with little notice, just like America's Active Duty servicemembers.

Despite the invaluable contributions of National Guard and Reserve personnel to our national security, Members may be surprised to learn that many of the men and women who served in the National Guard or Reserve for 20 years may not legally be considered "veterans" if they were never called up for Active Duty. This is not fair to these brave men and women who have demonstrated their patriotism through their willingness to wear the uniform and defend our Nation whenever and wherever they are needed.

H.R. 1384 would not provide any monetary benefit. It would simply honor the service and sacrifice of retired National Guard and Reserve personnel by giving them the prestigious title of "veteran"—in my opinion, the most prestigious title that Congress can bestow.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I stand before this body to support legislation introduced by my friend and colleague from Minnesota, TIM WALZ. As a retired guardsman himself and as the highest ranking enlisted soldier to serve in Congress, I know this bill is near and dear to his heart.

The Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act closes a long-existing gap. Federal law has neglected to acknowledge our guardsmen and -women and reservists who have served fewer than 180 days of Active Duty service as "veterans." This law would remedy this longstanding oversight by legally recognizing Guard and Reserve retirees as American veterans.

Our military is more dependent on Reserve components than they have been since the dawn of modern warfare. These are men and women who have stood ready and trained to serve our Nation at war. They have served a dedicated 20 years of service. At the very least, we should acknowledge the dedication of these servicemembers by legally recognizing them as American veterans.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

Mr. WALZ. I thank the subcommittee chairman and the ranking member for the time. More importantly, I thank both of them and their respective staffs for the bipartisan and continuously exceptional effort to serve our veterans. I thank them for the opportunity to move this forward.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has passed the House multiple times over the last 8 years. It is very simple. It is less than 150 words, and it is very rare in that it costs nothing, but I would argue that it is very important. The men and women of the Reserve component, as you so eloquently heard by my colleagues who spoke prior, take the exact same oath of office and are held to the exact same standards as the Active component. They sacrifice their time and energy. They stand at the ready if called upon, whether it is assisting flood victims in Minnesota, fighting wildfires across the Western United States, or fighting overseas in the protection of our freedoms.

For those who have completed 20 years or more in the Guard or Reserve but who have not served a qualifying period of Title X Active Duty, we honor their service with health care benefits and monetary benefits, with one notable exception—they must call themselves "military retirees" and not "veterans." As the gentleman from Pennsylvania noted, I think most Americans, when I talk to them, are unaware of this. Once they find out, they are appalled that we don't do it. This bill closes the loophole.

There are about 280,000 Americans who fall into this category. They have devoted their lives to our Nation—they have served honorably for 20 or 20-plus years—and this bill will recognize their service. It might be as simple as buying a hat that reads "Army veteran" or getting a license plate for your car. It bestows no monetary benefits to these brave men and women, merely the title. Again, my colleague from Pennsylvania, I think, said it right in that it is a pretty important title—a veteran of the United States military.

It also does something else very important. In doing so, we recognize the

integral role our National Guard and Reserve play in our Nation's defense. There is nothing quite so unifying or quintessentially American as the citizen soldier. Dating back to the founding of our Nation or serving overseas at a time of fighting terrorism, it is the mother who leaves her family and her law firm to serve her Nation, and it is the father who leaves his teaching job and his family to serve his Nation.

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It is about recognizing that our All Volunteer Force would be unsustainable if it were not for the men and women who dedicated 20 years of their lives. And one of the most important things they did, most of those are cold war warriors who were responsible for the training of the current force that protects us.

So I thank the gentleman and the ranking member again for their commitment to our veterans.

I ask my colleagues—we are on the heels of Veterans Day here—to add these 280,000. Let's do what is right. Let's call them veterans and honor their service.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 1384.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I also urge Members to support H.R. 1384.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1384.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO EMERGENCY PSYCHIATRIC CARE ACT

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 599) to extend and expand the Medicaid emergency psychiatric demonstration project, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 599

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Improving Access to Emergency Psychiatric Care Act".